

Election Procedures Review  
Of  
**Whatcom County**  
State of Washington  
2007 Primary Election



Conducted by the  
Office of the Secretary of State  
Election Certification and Training Program



# Introduction

The Washington State Legislature enacted legislation in 1992 mandating that the Office of the Secretary of State review county election procedures and practices. The Election Certification and Training Program was established within the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State to conduct reviews and to provide for the certification of election administrators. In 2005, the Legislature expanded the Election Certification and Training Program to require that each County Auditor's Office be reviewed at least once every three years. The Legislature also added a requirement that the Program conduct a follow-up visit to verify that the County Auditor's Office has taken steps to correct the problems noted in the report.

The election review process is governed by RCW 29A.04.510 through 29A.04.590 and Chapter 434-260 of the Washington Administrative Code.

Pursuant to RCW 29A.04.570(1)(b), the Election Certification and Training Program conducted an election review in Whatcom County during the 2007 Primary Election cycle. Samantha Duncan, Elections Program Specialist, represented the Election Certification and Training Program during the review. The Honorable Shirley Forslof, Whatcom County Auditor, Debbie Adelstein, Chief Deputy Auditor, Pete Griffin, Elections Supervisor, and other members of the staff participated on behalf of the Whatcom County Auditor's Office.

Both the reviewer and the Whatcom County Elections Department approached the review in a spirit of cooperation. The department allowed the reviewer to thoroughly review and examine all aspects of the election processes. The staff provided documentation and materials during the review which greatly contributed to a successful examination process.

The purpose of this review report is to provide the Whatcom County Elections Department with a useful evaluation of its election procedures and policies and to encourage procedural consistency in the administration of elections throughout the state. This review report includes a series of recommendations and suggestions that are intended to assist the Whatcom County Elections Department in improving and enhancing its election processes.

The reviewer is statutorily prohibited from making any evaluation, finding, or recommendation regarding the validity of any primary or election, or of any canvass of the election returns. Consequently, this review report should not be interpreted as affecting the validity of the outcome of any election or of any canvass of election returns.

# Table of Contents

Overview	Page 1
Recommendations	Page 2
Suggestions	Page 4
County's Response	Page 5
Conclusion	Page 17

# Overview

Located along the Canadian border and the Strait of Georgia, Whatcom County has over 102,000 registered voters in 119 precincts. Western Washington University is a major presence in the county with approximately 13,000 students in attendance. Partly due to this large student presence, nearly 20% of Whatcom County's registered voters require changes in their registration between every election. The Whatcom County Elections staff does a great job keeping on top of the very fluid population, maintaining up to date voter rolls by following established state and county procedures.

Whatcom County is currently remodeling parts of the courthouse to better suit the needs of the elections department. When the remodeling is completed, all aspects of ballot processing will be held in the same building, permitting a ballot path that is clear, controlled, and direct. The rooms intended for ballot opening, duplication, and tabulation will all have proximity locks requiring an employee to swipe an electronic badge to enter the room. Those locks, and the locks currently in place on the vaults in the County Auditor's Office, digitally record a log of who has entered and when. The logs are reviewed daily to detect any inappropriate access.

One of the most difficult items to allocate time to in any office is a procedures manual. The importance of having a manual that is complete and up to date cannot be understated. The Whatcom County Auditor's Office has prepared an outstanding Elections Policies and Procedures Manual. Because a procedures manual is a living document that requires constant updating, there will be more content and new features added to the manual in the future.

During the course of the review, staff members were extremely helpful and pleasant to work with. Morale in the office appears very high, and the dedication of the staff is unmistakable. While this report lists areas that must be addressed, overall, the Whatcom County Auditor's Office is doing an excellent job administering elections.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations indicate where the county is out of compliance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), the Washington State Constitution, or Federal election law. The reviewer obtained information based on actual observation of a procedure, verbal explanation, or written procedures. The reviewer provides a description of the county's procedure, a citation of the applicable law, and a recommendation based on the citation.

## **Notice to Voters Requiring Identification**

When a voter's identification is not verified at registration, a notice is sent to the voter along with the ballot requesting he or she fill out the form provided and/or provide a copy of an alternate form of identification in order for that voter's ballot to be counted. The form in the notice is similar to a registration form, with spaces for name, address, date of birth, driver's license number, last four digits of a Social Security number, and the oath attested to by the voter. The notice implies that the voter can merely fill out the form without sending in a copy of identification and that would be sufficient.

*WAC 434-250-045(1) requires, "If the voter registration record of an absentee voter is flagged as requiring verification of identity, a notice must be sent at the time of the election explaining that a photocopy of identification must be provided in order for the ballot to be counted, and listing what forms of identification are acceptable."*

**Recommendation:** The notice must be revised to remove the registration style form, and reworded to clarify that the voter is required to send in a copy of identification in order for the ballot to be counted.

## **Precincts and Precinct Boundaries**

Whatcom County has 119 precincts, some of which contain over 900 active registered voters. Additionally, a few precincts are not compact or contiguous.

*RCW 29A.16.040(3) requires, "Precincts in which voting machines or electronic voting devices are used may contain as many as nine hundred active registered voters."*

*RCW 29A.16.050(2) requires, "Every voting precinct shall be composed, as nearly as practicable, of contiguous and compact areas."*

**Recommendation:** The Whatcom County Elections Department must redraw precinct lines to ensure that all precincts have 900 or fewer active registered voters, and that all precincts are compact and contiguous.

## **Publishing Information on Voting Aids**

The elections department publishes information on voting aids the day before they are available to the public, almost three weeks after the notice of closing is published.

*RCW 29A.04.220 requires, “The county auditor shall provide public notice of the availability of registration and voting aids, assistance to elderly and disabled persons, and procedures for voting by absentee ballot calculated to reach elderly and disabled persons not later than public notice of the closing of registration for a primary or election.”*

**Recommendation:** This information must be published no later than the notice of closing of registration.

### **Special Absentee Ballot Application**

The special absentee ballot application contains spaces for the voter to indicate a name, date of birth, date, mailing address, email address, signature, the statement required by RCW 29A.40.050, a check box to indicate if the ballot will be picked up in person, a checkbox requesting a regular absentee when available, and a space to indicate which election the request is for. There is also a place for elections staff to print a label with the registered voter’s information.

*WAC 434-250-030(2)(a) requires, “A space for the voter to print his or her name and the address at which he or she is registered to vote...”*

*WAC 434-250-030(3)(a) requires, “A space for an overseas or service voter not registered to vote in Washington to indicate his or her last residential address in Washington...”*

**Recommendation:** The special absentee ballot application must be revised to include spaces for the voter to print his or her registered address or last residential address in Washington.

# Suggestions

The following are suggestions for increasing efficiency and improving operations within the County Auditor's Office. Although these suggestions do not address issues involving compliance with state laws or administrative rules, the reviewer identified the tasks as areas of election administration in which the County Auditor might improve the efficiency and operation of the office.

## **Verification Notice**

When an incomplete voter registration form is received, a verification notice is sent to the voter. If the voter returns the notice supplying the missing information within 45 days, the voter is registered. If the notice is not returned within that time frame, the voter is not registered unless the voter sends a new registration form. The elections department is following the correct procedures, but the notice sent to the voter does not include a warning of the 45 day time limit.

**Suggestion:** The notice should include a statement to the voter that in order to be registered with the original registration date, the notice must be returned to the County Auditor's Office within 45 days.

## **Challenged Signature Letters**

Occasionally, a spouse or family member will use an envelope issued to another voter in the house to mail in his or her ballot. When the ballot is received at the County Auditor's Office and the signature is being verified, the voter registration record that is brought up from the information printed on the envelope belongs to a voter other than the one who signed the oath and mailed in the ballot. Elections staff mails the voter whose name is printed on the envelope a letter, stating that the signature on the envelope did not match the signature on the voter registration record of the name printed on the envelope. The letter also instructs the voter that there are various procedures that must be followed for the ballot to be counted. However, the person that receives this letter is not the one that mailed in the ballot.

**Suggestion:** If the elections department wishes to send a letter, it should be specific to the situation. The letter could inform the voter that his or her envelope was used by another voter in the household, and provide instructions on how to obtain a replacement ballot or envelope.

## **Pens Used in the Tabulation Room**

In the area where ballots are duplicated, written office procedures prescribe that staff use only green pens. This ensures any marks made by the elections staff are easily recognizable. During tabulation, however, black or blue pens are used on logs and batch slips.

**Suggestion:** The elections department should consider providing pens in a distinguishable color in the tabulation area as they do in the duplication room.

# **County's Response to Draft Review Report**

The Election Certification and Training Program issued a Draft Review Report to the Whatcom County Canvassing Board in December 2007. In accordance with WAC 434-260-145, Whatcom County responded in writing to the recommendations listed in the draft report.

The Whatcom County Canvassing Board provided the following response to the Draft Review Report. The signed original of their response is on file in the Office of the Secretary of State.



**WHATCOM COUNTY  
AUDITOR'S OFFICE**

Whatcom County Courthouse  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038

Email: Auditor@co.whatcom.wa.us

Internet: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/auditor



**SHIRLEY FORSLOF**

COUNTY AUDITOR

**DEBBIE ADELSTEIN**

CHIEF DEPUTY

Phone: 360-676-6740

FAX: 360-738-4556

January 22, 2008

Samantha Duncan, Program Specialist  
Office of the Secretary of State  
520 Union Ave  
P.O. Box 40229  
Olympia, WA 98504-0229

**Re: Response to Election Procedures Review Report**

Dear Samantha:

Thank you for your level of professionalism and integrity in the manner in which you conducted the Whatcom County Election Review. We are pleased that we were selected for a full election review during the 2007 Primary Election.

Recommendations and suggestions in the Election Procedures Review were implemented in the Auditor's Office Policies and Procedures. However, we respectfully disagree with the recommendations of the Precincts and Precinct Boundaries. Please see my attached response to the recommendations provided by the Office of the Secretary of State.

Sincerely,

Shirley Forslof  
Whatcom County Auditor

Enclosure

cc: Sam Reed, Secretary of State

**WHATCOM COUNTY  
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Bellingham, WA 98225-4038

Email: Auditor@co.whatcom.wa.us

Internet: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/auditor



**SHIRLEY FORSLOF**

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Phone: 360-676-6740

FAX: 360-738-4556

**- RESPONSE -**

To Election Procedures Review  
Conducted by the Office of the Secretary of State  
Election Certification and Training Program

In Answer to **Recommendations:**

Notice to Voters Requiring Identification

When this item was brought to our attention at the time of the review, a change was implemented and we currently will use the notices attached as Exhibit A and A-1. This should meet the recommendation made. These notices are mailed at the time the registration form is received, and if it has not been responded to, the additional one (A-1) is mailed at the time ballots are mailed.

Precincts and Precinct Boundaries

The Auditor respectfully disagrees with this recommendation. At the time Whatcom County decided to consider vote-by-mail, we determined that the statute cited applied to poll voters and since we would not have poll sites we considered it would not apply to us. Legislation [RCW 29A.48.010(1)] allowed that a county council could adopt going vote by mail and that was the route that we chose.

Further, in RCW 29A.48.010, it stated: *“(2) The county auditor may designate any precinct having fewer than two hundred active registered voters at the time of closing of voter registration as provided in RCW 29A.08.140 as a mail ballot precinct. Authorization from the county legislative authority is not required to designate a precinct as a mail ballot precinct under this subsection. In determining the number of registered voters in a precinct for the purposes of this section, persons who are ongoing absentee voters under RCW 29A.40.040 shall not be counted. . .”* It was felt that vote-by-mail voters were the same thing as “ongoing absentee voters”, therefore, in not counting them, all precincts would in effect be less than two hundred.

There is also pending legislation that may make this matter moot anyway.

With regard to precincts which were cited as not seeming to be contiguous or compact, in the case of the City of Blaine, we follow the ward boundaries which are established by the city. The boundaries currently reflect the wards boundaries that they have established, but they will be revising these in the coming year to keep pace with annexations that have been made in the past.

The other two precincts which you inquired about, namely 126 and 112, follow other special purpose and school district boundaries which are taken into consideration when precinct boundaries are made. They also involve extensive expanses of farm land so it doesn't make sense to make the precincts smaller. In the case of 126 the expansion of Lynden city limits is making further and further incursions into the space that was 126 and will soon bisect that precinct. Perhaps at that time it will make sense to create separate precincts. In either case, since Whatcom County is vote-by-mail we're not sure what difference it makes.

#### Publishing Information on Voting Aids

When this was brought to our attention at the time of the visit, we corrected this finding by planning to put out a News Release on this topic 5 days prior to the Notice of Closing being published in the newspaper. A copy of the News Release is attached as Exhibit B. We also added addition phrasing to the Notice of Closing itself. See attached Exhibit C.

#### Special Absentee Ballot Application

We agree that adding space for the voter to print his or her name and the address at which he or she is registered to vote, or in the case of an overseas or service voter, where he or she last lived in the State of Washington, will be added to our application. A copy of the new application is attached as Exhibit D.

With regard to **Suggestions** made:

#### Verification Notice

We agree with your suggestion and have made appropriate language changes in our verification notice. A copy of the new notice is attached as Exhibit E.

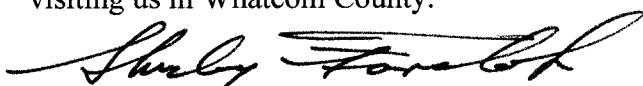
#### Challenged Signature Letters

We agree with your suggestion that if we send a letter in the instance of someone other than the voter to whom a ballot was directed signing the ballot envelope, we have developed the attached letter. See Exhibit F.

#### Pens Used in the Tabulation Room

We have made a new policy statement in our processing of ballots to provide that in any area where opened ballots are present only green pens may be in use. See Exhibit G.

Thank you for the opportunity to make responses to your review. It was a pleasure to have you visiting us in Whatcom County.

  
Shirley Forslof, Whatcom County Auditor

Date: 1/14/08

Whatcom County Courthouse  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4186  
360-676-6742  
360-738-4556 FAX  
360-738-4555 TTY  
Email: [elections@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:elections@co.whatcom.wa.us)  
[www.co.whatcomcounty.us/auditor](http://www.co.whatcomcounty.us/auditor)



## Whatcom County Auditor's Office

### Election Division

EXHIBIT A

January 8, 2008

«VoterName»  
«MailAddress1»  
«MailAddress2»  
«MailAddress3»  
«MailAddress4»

«Affidavit»

### IDENTITY VERIFICATION NOTICE

The Secretary of State's Office was unable to verify your identification. Therefore we must obtain further identification from you under the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) voter registration procedures. Proper identification must be provided and verified before for a ballot can to be accepted and counted.

This is a one time process; once the ID has been provided, the requirements for registration are then satisfied for future elections.

Provide a **copy** of **one** of the following forms of identification:

- ◇ Valid photo identification; or
- ◇ A valid enrollment card of a federally recognized tribe in Washington; or
- ◇ A current utility bill; or
- ◇ A current bank statement, or paycheck; or
- ◇ A current government check or document with your name and address.

ATTACH the copy of your ID to this letter and return it in the postage paid envelope.

Whatcom County Courthouse  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4186  
360-676-6742  
360-738-4556 FAX  
360-738-4555 TTY  
Email: [elections@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:elections@co.whatcom.wa.us)  
[www.co.whatcom.wa.us/auditor](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/auditor)



## Whatcom County Auditor's Office

### Election Division

January 7, 2008

EXHIBIT A-1

«Voter\_Name»

«Residence»

«City» «Zip\_Code»

«Reg\_Number»

### IDENTITY VERIFICATION NOTICE

The Secretary of State's Office was unable to verify your identification. Therefore we must obtain further identification from you for your ballot to be accepted and counted.

This is a one time process; once the ID has been provided, the requirements for registration are then satisfied for future elections.

Provide a **copy** of **one** of the following forms of identification:

- ◇ Valid photo identification; or
- ◇ A valid enrollment card of a federally recognized tribe in Washington; or
- ◇ A current utility bill; or
- ◇ A current bank statement or paycheck; or
- ◇ A current government check or document with your name and address.

**Attach the copy of your ID to this letter and return with your ballot.  
Do not put inside the secrecy envelope.**

**Whatcom County  
Auditor's Office**  
Whatcom County Courthouse  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038



**SHIRLEY FORSLOF**  
County Auditor  
**DEBBIE ADELSTEIN**  
Chief Deputy

Email: [auditor@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:auditor@co.whatcom.wa.us)  
Internet: [www.whatcomcounty.us/auditor](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/auditor)  
Telephone: (360) 676-6740

**EXHIBIT B**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**January 4, 2008**

**Contact:** Shirley Forslof, Whatcom County Auditor (360) 676-6744  
Debbie Adelstein, Chief Deputy Auditor (360) 676-6740, ext. #50065

Shirley Forslof, Whatcom County Auditor, announced that the Elections Staff in the Auditor's Office is available to help with voter registration, voting aids and any other assistance a voter may need for the Washington Presidential Primary Election on February 19, 2008.

Auditor Forslof reminds voters they may cast their ballot at the Whatcom County Auditor's Office using an Accessible Voting Unit (AVU). The AVU is available to voters with impaired vision and/or physical disabilities and is equipped with visual and audio technology that allows the voter to vote a secret ballot. The Accessible Voting Units will be available to vote on beginning January 30, 2008.

If you have any questions, please contact (360) 676-6742 or TTY (360) 738-4555.

**Licensing/Recording**

360-676-6740

**Elections**

360-676-6742

**Administration/Internal Audit**

360-676-6744  
360-676-6740- ext 50065

**TTY**

360-738-4555

**FAX**

360-738-4556

**Whatcom County  
Auditor's Office**

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311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
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Internet: [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/auditor](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/auditor)



**SHIRLEY FORSLOF**  
County Auditor  
**DEBBIE ADELSTEIN**  
Chief Deputy

EXHIBIT C

**NOTICE OF CLOSING OF THE REGISTRATION BOOKS AND  
SPECIAL PROCEDURE FOR LATE REGISTRATION FOR THE  
WASHINGTON PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION  
HELD ON FEBRUARY 19, 2008**

The registration books in all Whatcom County, Washington precincts will be closed to mail-in registrations and transfers between precincts after Saturday, January 19, 2008. They will remain closed until after the Washington Presidential Primary Election held on Tuesday, February 19, 2008.

Mail-in voter registration forms must be postmarked no later than January 19, 2008 in order to register by mail for the Washington Presidential Primary Election on February 19, 2008.

Mail-in voter registration forms can be picked up at the following locations:

Auditor's Office  
Licensing Sub Agents  
Bellingham City Fire Stations  
Bellingham Public Libraries  
City Clerks Offices

Post Offices  
Whatcom County Rural Libraries  
State Drivers License Agency  
Major grocery stores

If a person is not registered to vote in the state of Washington *and* qualifies to vote in the state, county and precinct in which he/she applies for registration *and* has not registered by the closing date of January 19, 2008, he/she may register to vote in person at the Whatcom County Auditor's Office and receive a ballot for the Washington Presidential Primary Election.

Please note the special in-person registration will be held from Tuesday, January 22, 2008 through Monday, February 4, 2008, during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) at the Whatcom County Auditor's Office, Whatcom County Courthouse, 311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103, Bellingham, WA.

The Election Staff in the Auditor's Office is available for assistance to elderly and disabled persons (including the Accessible Voting Unit). Staff is also available for questions regarding voter registration, instructions on accurately marking the ballot, and any other voter assistance.

Shirley Forslof  
Whatcom County Auditor and  
Ex-officio Supervisor of Elections

**Publish: January 10, 2008**

Licensing/Recording	Elections	Administration/Internal Audit	TTY	FAX
360-676-6740	360-676-6742	360-676-6744 360-676-6740- ext 50065	360-738-4555	360-738-4556



# WHATCOM COUNTY SPECIAL ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION

EXHIBIT D

**RCW 29A.40.050;** As provided in this section, county auditors shall provide special absentee ballots to be used for state primary or state general elections. An auditor shall provide a special absentee ballot only to a registered voter who completes an application stating that she or he will be unable to vote and return a regular absentee ballot by normal mail delivery within the period provided for regular absentee ballots.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Residence Address in Washington:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PLACE VOTER LABEL HERE

I am not able to vote and return a regular ballot by normal mail delivery within the time provided for regular mail ballots. I request a Special Absentee ballot for the:

☐ PRIMARY and/or ☐ GENERAL Election(s)

☐ In Person Pick Up

☐ Also Mail a Regular Ballot When Available

If the regular ballot is voted and returned, it will be counted instead of the Special Early ballot, which will be held until the day before certification of the election.

Mail to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

email to:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Return Completed form to:  
Whatcom County Election Division  
311 Grand Ave #103  
Bellingham WA 98225





Whatcom County  
Auditor's Office

Election Division

EXHIBIT E

January 7, 2008



«VoterID»

«VoterName»  
«MailAddress1»  
«MailAddress2»  
«MailAddress3»  
«MailAddress4»

VERIFICATION NOTICE

Our office received your Voter Registration Application, however, per RCW 29A.08.210 it is incomplete. Complete the form below and return it to our office in the enclosed postage paid envelope within 45 days. You will then be registered and eligible to vote as of the date the application was originally submitted.

Registration Status – «szStatusReasonDesc»

Last Name		( ) Jr ( ) Sr ( ) II ( ) III	First Name		Middle Name	
Date of Birth (Month/Day/Year) / /		Daytime Phone Number (w/area code) ( )		E-Mail (Optional)		( ) Male ( ) Female
Physical Street Address Where You Live In Whatcom County				City		Zip Code
Mailing Address (if inside Whatcom County)				City	State	Zip Code
If your mailing address is OUTSIDE WHATCOM COUNTY, fill in address below:						
Mailing Address:				City	State	Zip Code
Mailing Start Date: / /	Mailing End Date: / /	This year only Same dates every year Permanent mailing				
Federal Law requires you to provide your Driver's License number. If you do not have a Washington Driver's License, you must provide the last 4 digits of your Social Security Number. Failure to provide this information may prevent your registration from being processed.				WA Driver's License #		Last 4 Digits of SSN
				Check here <u>ONLY</u> if you DO NOT have a WA Drivers License, ID Card, OR SSN.		<input type="checkbox"/>
NAME CHANGE		Former Name		YES <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Former Signature		Are You a US Citizen? NO <input type="checkbox"/>		
<p>"By signing this document, I hereby assert, under penalty of perjury, that I am legally eligible to vote. If I am found to have voted illegally, I may be prosecuted and/or fined for this illegal act. In addition, I hereby acknowledge that my name and last known address will be forwarded to the appropriate state and/or Federal authorities if I am found to have voted illegally." (RCW 29A.08.210)</p> <p>Voter Declaration – Must be read and signed below:</p> <p>"I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I am a citizen of the United States;</li><li>I am not presently denied my civil rights as a result of being convicted of a felony;</li><li>I will have lived in Washington at this address for thirty days immediately before the next election at which I vote;</li><li>I will be a least eighteen years old when I vote."</li></ul> <p>RCW 29A.08.230</p> <p>Date Signed: _____</p> <p>Sign Here X inside the box</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 200px; height: 50px; margin-left: 100px;"></div>						

Whatcom County Courthouse  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4186  
360-676-6742  
360-738-4556 FAX  
360-738-4555 TTY  
Email: [elections@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:elections@co.whatcom.wa.us)  
[www.co.whatcomcounty.us/auditor](http://www.co.whatcomcounty.us/auditor)



Whatcom County  
Auditor's Office

Election Division

EXHIBIT F


January 8, 2008

«szNameFirst» «szNameMiddle» «szNameLast»  
«szMailAddress1»  
«szMailAddress2»  
«szMailAddress3»  
«szMailAddress4»

«sAffNumber»

Your ballot was returned to us, but was signed by someone else.

Please contact our office at 360-676-6745 to discuss your options.

«szNameFirst» «szNameMiddle» «szNameLast»  
«ElectionTitle» -   
Returned by - «ReturnMethod»  
«ReturnStatus» - «ChallengeReason»

**AU1#####A****POLICY**

## **Preparing Ballots for Processing (AUDITOR'S OFFICE – Elections)**

This policy applies to Auditor's Office staff.

### **1. Retrieval of Ballots Requires Two Election Workers.**

Daily, beginning the Monday after ballots are mailed out until the day before certification, two election workers will go to the post office to retrieve ballot envelopes. Daily, or more frequently if needed, two election workers will empty the drop box in the Auditor's Office and the curbside drop box. .

### **2. All Ballots Scanned into Election Management System on Day Received.**

On the day received, ALL ballot envelopes will be scanned into the election management system. A report will be run of how many are received each day.

### **3. Ballots Are Tracked Through Stages of Process.**

Ballots received will be tracked through the various stages of processing to final count on tracking logs (see FRM #####) and will be reconciled prior to counting. The ballot logs will indicate how many ballots are ready to be counted in that batch and the counting machine operator will note the count. If there is any difference between the number expected to count and the number the machine counts, the difference will be reconciled in the counting center prior to entry of that batch's total into the final count.

### **4. Ballots Are Placed in Mixed Mode Batches.**

Ballots are divided into batches of approximately 100 ballots without regard to precinct sorting. The counting machines will report tallies by precinct.

### **5. Green Pens Used in Open Ballot Areas.**

In areas where opened ballots are processed, including opening board work areas and counting room, only green ink pens will be used.

## Conclusion

The Whatcom County Elections staff is extremely committed to performing their jobs with excellence. There are five full-time employees dedicated only to elections, and temporary employees are brought in to help with ballot processing when needed. Administering elections has become more complicated and time consuming in recent years. Fulfilling new requirements and striving for perfection, especially in the areas of accountability and security, requires additional staff and time. If statutory requirements continue to increase, or if there is an increase in the population of registered voters in the county, the Whatcom County Elections Department will need more staff to maintain the same level of precision.

Whatcom County is home to a number of citizens actively interested in the election administration process. In an effort to partner with these citizens, Shirley Forslof, Whatcom County Auditor, has founded the Citizens Elections Advisory Committee (CEAC). The members of CEAC include representatives of political parties, special interest groups, the disability community, and cities within the county. The committee provides feedback to the Auditor on voting equipment, elections procedures, and any other issues or questions citizens may have. CEAC gives the community an opportunity to voice opinions on elections matters in a spirit of partnership with the Auditor's office. Shirley Forslof should be commended for the example she has set working together with her constituents.

The Whatcom County Elections Department, under the leadership of County Auditor Shirley Forslof, is doing a remarkable job. The staff works well as a team; each member performs his or her duties efficiently, professionally, and with a positive attitude. It is readily apparent that the whole department strives for perfection. Addressing the items mentioned in this report will make this already fine operation even better.

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